Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

JAMES C. SPACE

1.9622
I2R312

Research Note

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE

INTERMOUNTAIN FOREST & RANGE EXPERIMENT STATION
OGDEN UTAH

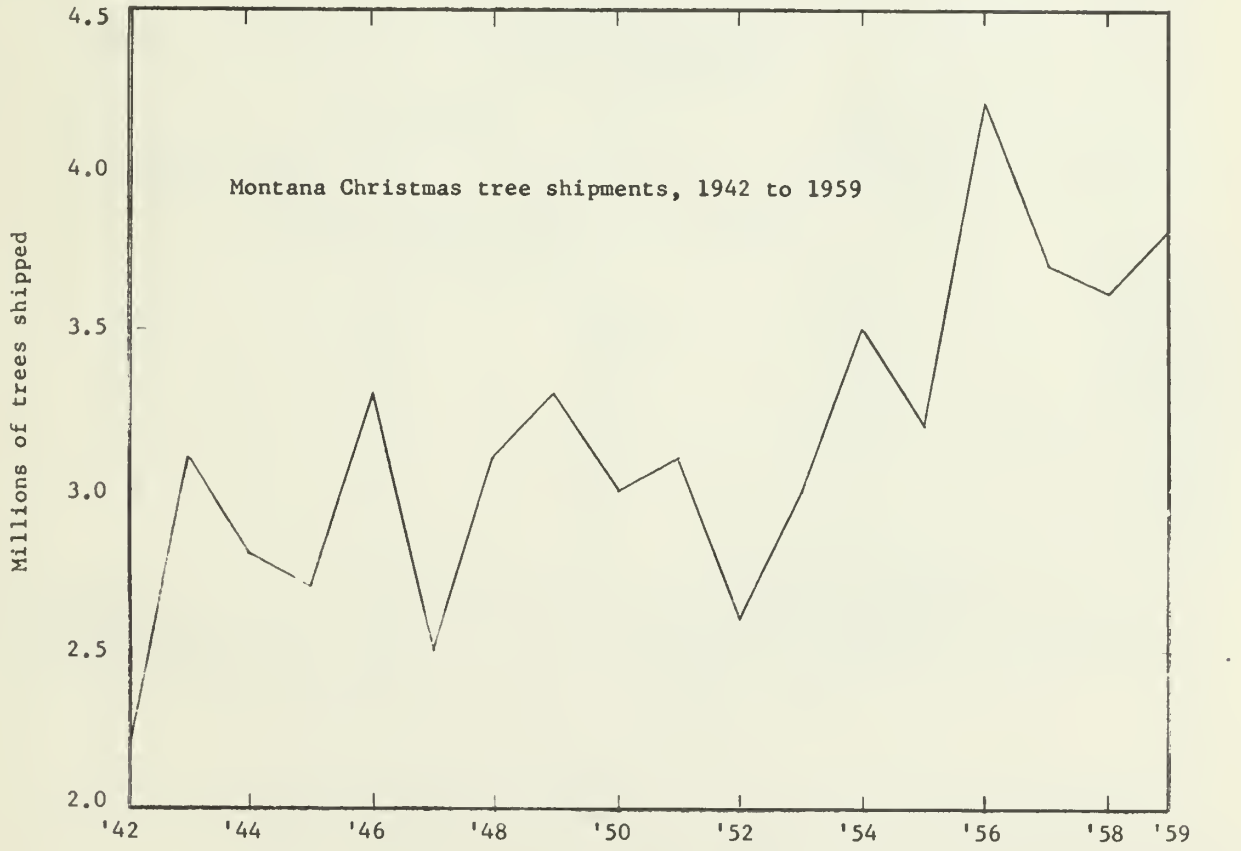
No. 73 May 1960

USDA
NAT'L AGRIC. LIBRARY
1960 DEC 16 A 11:30

AN UPSWING IN MONTANA'S CHRISTMAS TREE EXPORTS

Alvin K. Wilson
Division of Forest Economics

Montana Christmas tree exports[1/] rebounded in 1959 to achieve the second highest volume on record--nearly 3.8 million trees. Surveys for 1957 and 1958 shipments had shown a somewhat disturbing decline from the all-time peak of 4.2 million trees reached in 1956. The latest survey shows that this decline



1/ This report deals only with Christmas tree exports; not total Christmas tree production. Rail shipments data were furnished by all the transstate railroads operating in Montana; truck shipments data were supplied by the State Forester, the University of Montana, and the national forests; and figures for imports were from the U.S. Customs Service. Unreported truck shipments were estimated to amount to 5 percent of the State's exports but no adjustment for these is included in this report.

stopped at 3.6 million trees in 1958, and an encouraging upswing has occurred since. Exports in 1959 were 5 percent higher than those of 1958 but were still 11 percent below the 1956 record.

The 2-year slump was probably a reflection of the general business recession of 1957-58 for the most part, although some sections of the State had good reasons for attributing the lowered output to forest insect and disease conditions. It has been noted that insect defoliation of Douglas-fir was less in 1959 than in the previous 2 years[2/] and any consequent improvement in appearance and vigor of this principal Christmas tree species would undoubtedly contribute to the upswing.

As in 1958, Flathead, Lincoln, and Missoula Counties supplied 73 percent of all trees shipped from the State. Flathead County's 10 percent increase over 1958 was easily sufficient to place it in top position. Although Lincoln County held the top place in 1958, Flathead County has been the leader in 8 of the past 10 years. Missoula County's shipments increased 5 percent from 1958 to 1959, while Sanders and Lake County figures were 20 percent and 41 percent higher, respectively.

Table 1.--Shipments of Christmas trees by rail and truck from Montana, by counties, 1959

County	Rail shipments	Truck shipments	Total	Percent
	Thousands of trees			
Flathead	926	117	1,043	28
Lincoln	826	132	958	25
Missoula	314	444	758	20
Sanders	290	124	414	11
Lake	380	30	410	11
Lewis and Clark	0	75	75	2
Ravalli	5	28	33	1
Mineral	0	30	30	1
Others	0	30	30	1
Total	2,741	1,010	3,751	100

2/Terrell, Tom T., and Robert E. Denton. Insect attacks look less dangerous for '60. West. Conserv. Jour. XVII(1): 30-31, 45-46. Jan.-Feb. 1960.

Although total shipments were up from 1958, truck shipments were down 8 percent from their 1958 level. Rail shipments, however, were nearly 10 percent above their 1958 level, affording the railroads their eighth best year for tree exports in the 18 years of records. Truck shipments exceeded 1 million trees for the third consecutive year.

Table 2.--Comparison of rail and truck Christmas tree shipments from Montana, 1942-1959

Year	Rail shipments		Truck shipments		Total shipments
	Thousands of trees	Percent	Thousands of trees	Percent	
1942	2,139	97	65	3	2,204
1943	2,931	94	172	6	3,103
1944	2,636	96	120	4	2,756
1945	2,556	94	168	6	2,724
1946	2,867	87	432	13	3,299
1947	2,210	88	306	12	2,516
1948	2,731	87	392	13	3,123
1949	2,817	86	440	14	3,257
1950	2,693	89	325	11	3,018
1951	2,784	90	301	10	3,085
1952	2,375	90	270	10	2,645
1953	2,389	79	631	21	3,020
1954	2,760	79	723	21	3,483
1955	2,855	88	380	12	3,235
1956	3,349	80	847	20	4,196
1957	2,631	71	1,089	29	3,720
1958	2,470	69	1,098	31	3,568
1959	2,741	73	1,010	27	3,751

Rail shipments went to 26 states in 1959. The leading market states occupied the same relative positions as in 1958 but the topmost, Texas and California, increased their combined receipts from 30 percent of all rail shipments to 41 percent. Apparently the increased shipments to these two States accounted for nearly all of the increase in 1959.

Table 3.--Rail shipments of Montana Christmas trees to leading markets, 1959 and 1958

State	1959		State	1958	
	Thousands of trees	Percent		Thousands of trees	Percent
Texas	627	23	Texas	399	16
California	489	18	California	337	14
Missouri	285	10	Missouri	271	11
Oklahoma	247	9	Oklahoma	242	10
Iowa	233	9	Iowa	209	8
Kansas	200	7	Kansas	209	8
Illinois	171	6	Illinois	161	7
Nebraska	100	4	Nebraska	123	5
Louisiana	95	4	Louisiana	90	4
Tennessee	38	1	Florida	47	2
Others	256	9	Others	382	15
Total	2,741	100	Total	2,470	100

Imports of Christmas trees from Canada to Montana amounted to 189,590 trees in 1959 and set a new record 20 percent higher than the previous record (157,738 trees) set in 1958. Although the average number of trees per bale was slightly lower in 1959 than in 1958, the value per bale of imported trees was nearly 14 percent higher in 1959 than in 1958.

Table 4.--Christmas trees imported from Canada to Montana, 1946-1959

Year	Total trees imported	Percent of total shipped
1946	107,570	3.3
1947	89,944	3.6
1948	67,664	2.2
1949	54,050	1.7
1950	39,288	1.3
1951	72,036	2.3
1952	99,918	3.8
1953	99,055	3.3
1954	123,076	3.5
1955	125,603	3.9
1956	137,015	3.3
1957	46,809	1.3
1958	157,738	4.4
1959	189,590	5.1